

The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust



Communication Policy

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The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust



Our Mission

Outstanding Catholic education for all pupils. As a family of schools, we will enable our young people to develop spiritually, morally, intellectually and personally, putting their faith into action, through serving Christ in others, in the church and in the world around them.

This policy was approved by the Resources Committee on behalf of the Trust Board

Signature:

Mrs Diane Gaskin
Chair of the Trust Board

Date: 02/07/24

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Review Frequency:	Every 3-years		
Version	Date	Description	Revision Author/s
1.0 Published	September 2024	New Policy	MHY (Headteacher SMM) AWH (Head of HR) JJN (Head of Governance) Unions Consultation Groups across the Trust.

Purpose

The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust (BWCAT) recognises the importance of working in partnership with stakeholders to ensure effective and respectful communication at all times. This policy aims to make explicit the expectations regarding internal and external communication in our BWCAT schools. It aims to support effective communication with stakeholders and support staff wellbeing by reducing staff workload. It is recognised that in working closely with parents and carers, effective communication between home and school is key. However, it is also acknowledged that it can often be difficult communicating with school staff when they have a very full timetable working directly with children each day and parents and carers also have very busy lives.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- efficient distribution and direction of communication
- explicit expectations are clear and expectations are managed to support staff wellbeing and reduce workload
- work and home boundaries are clear
- parents better understand the context school staff are working in and modify expectations of an immediate reply
- high standards of home-school communication are maintained

This policy links to the:

- BWCAT Complaints Policy and Procedure
- BWCAT Disciplinary Policy
- BWCAT Equality Statement and Objectives
- BWCAT ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Department for Education Workload and Wellbeing Toolkit

Types of Communication

BWCAT schools use the following types of communication routinely:

Internal Communication	External Communication
Meetings Emails Staff intranet/Microsoft Teams CPOMs/Safeguarding System Management Information System (MIS) Telephone Bulletin notices	Website Social media Newsletters and notices Student planner Meetings Emails Telephone

Staff briefings Calendar Governor Hub	Letters Management Information System/Parent Parent Mail Formal reporting (to parents/others)
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External Communication: - Parental Communication

Parental Contact with the School

It is important to note that school staff want to respond to parental queries at the earliest opportunity and will do their best to do so, however, the majority of staff time is taken up working directly with children, teaching and preparing for lessons. Staff responsibilities also extend beyond the classroom, and they may be unable to respond on the day a query is made. It has also been agreed with staff that there is no expectation to respond to queries during their personal time.

Communication by telephone, email or student planner (secondary school) are the preferred initial methods for a parent to contact the school.

Telephone

The main visitor reception number is available to leave a message for a staff member to contact you:

- Visitor reception staff will relay messages to staff as soon as possible
- If a call is urgent, such as a family emergency, child protection or safeguarding matter, parents are asked to inform the visitor receptionist who will find a designated safeguarding leader/officer (DSL/DSO) or senior member of staff to speak to them
- Staff will try to respond within three working days if it is not possible to contact on the same day. Part-time staff may take longer to reply due to their contracted hours
- Parents are asked to take note that lessons or student-centred activities will never be interrupted for staff to take telephone calls

Email

The preferred email address for parents to use is the main school administrative email address office@sacredheart.bradford.sch.uk. This can also be found on the school website. If a parent does attempt to email a staff member, following the procedure stated below under 'Arranging a Meeting in a BWCAT Secondary/Primary School', via their direct email address they should be mindful of the following:

- Staff members are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day because they are working directly with children at this time and the school does not expect work emails to be checked during a staff member's personal time
- Staff aim to respond as soon as possible and within three working days. Part-time staff may take longer to reply due to their contracted hours.

Parents are reminded of the following when sending emails:

- Be mindful of the tone of your email – do not convey negative thoughts, feelings and/or negative feedback
- Avoid the use of capital letters, bold or coloured fonts, underlining and enlarged fonts
- Avoid sending an email when emotionally charged or upset
- Be mindful of the timing of the email, especially if it contains bad news or issues e.g. try to avoid the end of the working day or the end of the week
- Do not expect a reply if an email is sent out of working hours
- Direct the email to one person so that it is clear who should respond and avoid sending emails to multiple people

Student Planner (Secondary School)

In a secondary school, notes in a student planner are the best way to get a message to a staff member promptly and should be used for most of the everyday communication. The student is responsible for showing the note to the correct staff member. This is the best way to ask staff members to contact you if a more detailed conversation is required.

Meetings

Meetings can be booked in advance to discuss a matter relating to your child. Meetings should always be pre-arranged with members of staff. If a parent urgently needs to see someone, for instance if there is a serious family emergency or a child protection or safeguarding issue, a parent should telephone ahead, and the visitor reception staff will do their best to find a designated safeguarding leader/officer (DSL/DSO) or senior member of staff to speak to them. For non-urgent meetings, staff will liaise with parents within 5 school working days to agree a mutually convenient time to meet. The school will determine the level of urgency and whether a meeting is required at its discretion, to enable it to manage multiple demands.

Arranging a Meeting in a BWCAT Secondary School

Should a parent wish to arrange a meeting with one of the following staff (listed below) they should, in the first instance, make contact via the main administrative email address or telephone number:

- Form Tutor – if the query is related to a pastoral matter
- Classroom Teacher - if the query is relevant to a specific subject
- School SENCO – if the query is relevant to a SEND need

Should the matter not be resolved, or require escalation, a parent may wish to contact one of the following staff (listed below) via the main administrative email address or telephone number:

- Year Leader – if the query is related to a pastoral matter
- Faculty/Subject Leader - if the query is relevant to a specific subject
- Executive SENCO – if the query is relevant to a SEND need

Should the matter not be resolved or require further escalation to a senior member of staff (listed below), a parent may contact them via the main administrative email address or telephone number:

- Assistant Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- Headteacher

Arranging a Meeting in a BWCAT Primary School

In the first instance, a parent may approach via the main administrative email address or telephone number the following member of staff:

- Classroom Teacher
- School SENCO – if the query is relevant to a SEND need

Should the matter not be resolved, or require escalation, a parent may approach via the main administrative email address or telephone number the following member of staff:

- Deputy Headteacher

Should the matter not be resolved or require further escalation, a parent may approach via the main administrative email address or telephone number the following member of staff:

- Headteacher

The School Contacting Parents

The school's preferred method of contacting parents is via Parent Mail. Parents are required to ensure their contact details are up to date and accurate.

School Website

BWCAT schools use the school website as a channel to promote effective communication. The website provides much of the information a parent should require. Parents can access the school website via [Sacred Heart Catholic Primary - Home](#)

Social Media

BWCAT schools use social media channels to promote student achievements, subject information and generic educational information. Parents can find these by searching Facebook- Sacred Heart Primary School Ilkley.

No Response

If a parent has not received a response from the school within five working days, they should contact the school by emailing office@sacredheart.bradford.sch.uk and your enquiry will be followed up. In the subject headline, please state that this is a follow up email due to no response.

Zero Tolerance to Abusive Behaviour

All members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place in which to work and learn. Violence, threatening behaviour, harassment and abuse against school staff or other members of the school community will not be tolerated. There is zero tolerance of such behaviour within the BWCAT schools. Where such behaviour does occur, action will be taken to deal with the person(s) concerned, for example school staff will respectfully terminate a telephone conversation if the language becomes threatening or abusive.

Examples of behaviour that would not be tolerated are:

- Screaming, shouting, loud intrusive language
- Threats or threatening behaviour
- Malicious allegations relating to others
- Harassment and bullying
- Offensive or discriminatory language, including derogatory remarks
- Intimidating behaviour – verbal or non-verbal
- Inciting hatred or hostility towards others
- Wilful damage to property
- Theft
- Violence towards a person or property
- Offensive sexual gestures or remarks
- Unreasonable or repeated demands on staff time

Please note that the above are examples only and by no means an exhaustive list.

Actions to be Taken if an Adult Incident Occurs (The process may be accelerated according to the level of behaviour)

Step 1: Address the Issue

If the issue is a low-level concern such as the tone or content of an email, then a staff member may wish to address the issue directly themselves in the first instance. This may take the form of verbally reminding a person of the communication expectations or it may take the form of an email reminder. Below is a sample paragraph that may be used.

Sample Paragraph

Thank you for taking the time to communicate with me. Please be assured I wish to work with you to find a positive way forward and to support your child. Please may I take this opportunity to respectfully remind you of our BWCAT Communication Policy (attached) expectations and ask you to be mindful of the tone and approach of future communication with the school. We wish to maintain a positive working environment at the school which is built on mutual respect.

Step 2: Internally Report the Incident and Headteacher Consideration

If a higher-level adult incident involving violence, threatening behaviour, harassment or abuse does occur then an internal incident report form (Appendix 1) should be completed

by the member of the school staff against whom the abuse was directed. This should be submitted to the Headteacher for consideration and further action if required.

The Headteacher may firstly email the person(s) to remind them of the BWCAT Communications Policy and the expectations adopted by the school. The Headteacher may decide to invite the person(s) for an informal conversation regarding the incident, either via telephone or in person. The Headteacher and an unrelated member of staff will be present during this conversation. It will be put to the person(s) that such behaviour is unacceptable, and an assurance will be sought that such an incident will not reoccur. Any communication will be recorded and filed in case of further incidents. If further unacceptable behaviour occurs, then it will result in escalated action being taken.

Step 3: Written warning

If a further incident occurs involving the same person(s), the Headteacher will formally write to the person(s) informing them again that this conduct is unacceptable (Appendix 2).

Step 4: Final Written Warning

If a further incident occurs involving the same person(s), the Headteacher would refer the case to the Chair of the Academy Council who will review the case and consider whether to give a final written warning (Appendix 3). The police may be contacted if there is a repetition of this conduct.

Step 5: Invitation to Recommendations

If an incident reoccurs, or the initial incident is serious enough to warrant being banned from entering or being on school premises, the Academy Council will invite the person(s) to present and make representations regarding the incident (Appendix 4). This is an opportunity for the person(s) to voice their side in relation to the incidents which have occurred.

The person(s) does not need to attend, and if they choose not to attend their representations will be taken into consideration when the Academy Council determines whether they should be banned from entering or being on school premises.

The Academy Council may decide to impose a temporary ban on entering or being on school premises until the representations have been made and the Academy Council has had the opportunity to decide the outcome.

Step 6: BWCAT Exclusion Letter and Involvement of the Police

If an incident reoccurs, or the initial incident is serious enough, the Academy Council will seek to enforce any action deemed necessary. This may involve the BWCAT Board of Trust Directors/CEO and/or the police and may result in a person(s) being banned from the school premises (Appendix 5)

If, following a decision to ban a person(s) from the school premises, and the person(s) persists in entering school premises and causes a nuisance or disturbance, they may be removed from the school premises by the police as a trespasser and prosecuted under Section 47 of the Education Act 1996. They may also be charged with an offence under the Public Order Act 1986 or other such legislation.

All parents, even if excluded from the school premises following action by BWCAT, have a right to be informed about their child's educational progress. This could be achieved through a virtual meeting with the parent or a controlled face-to-face meeting, or through a written report. Information of any incidents of abusive or threatening behaviour will be passed from the primary school to the secondary school on transition. This will include any information on verbal or written warning.

The ban from entering or being on school premises will be subject to a review. On which the person(s) will be entitled to make representations as to how their behaviour has changed since they have been banned from the school premises. These representations must be received 5-school days prior to the review.

Information of any incidents of abusive or threatening behaviour will be passed from the primary school to the secondary school on transition. This will include any information on verbal or written warning.

Other Communication: - Staff Communication

Email Protocol

Digital communication is an integral part of how a school communicates to stakeholders both internally and externally. If used correctly it is a powerful and effective tool to get instant key messages and actions to multiple people. Email can be a useful form of communication, but high volumes can cause new pressures for staff and have a detrimental effect on mental health and wellbeing. It is important that staff are able to enjoy life outside of directed time, and so these guidelines aim to alleviate the pressure of perceived expectations, and contribute positively to work-life balance.

As a guideline, staff are not expected to check emails outside of their directed time, or over the weekend. For those who want to prepare for the week ahead, a Sunday evening check should be enough. It is a good idea to draw a line under a working day, to maintain a distinction between work life and school life.

During the hours of the school day, staff should be mindful of the emails they are sending and should consider workload and wellbeing before communicating. The below protocols aim to reduce the volume of emails sent and received within the school day, especially those sent to 'All staff'. Please note, all emails must have a descriptive heading to make it clear what the email is about. These protocols will be kept under regular review.

Examples of email content	Email or No Email	Action
Lost/Found Property	No email	Send student to check in the lost property area at break/lunchtime
Matters relating to teaching and learning (deadlines, approaching, CPD meetings etc)	Email	Consider the demands on staff when constructing the email
Issues about students not being sat together	No email	Issued on Weekly Bulletin and in Briefing
Email requests for drivers needed for trips	Email	To all staff
Students out on trips	Email	To teachers of specific students via ARBOR
Moderation/exam details	Email	To teachers only
Sports Club and fixtures	Email	To teachers of particular students
SEND top tips	Email	Email to teachers and TAs periodically
Injured student, leaving lessons early	One Email a week	Weekly Bulletin and Briefing
Students and mentors	Email	Email to teachers

Please note that the above are examples only and by no means an exhaustive list

Sending and Receiving Emails

When sending emails, staff members should ensure they are following the expectations as outlined in the BWCAT ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

In addition to the BWCAT ICT Acceptable Use policy, the following guidelines are useful reminders for both the email sender and receiver to ensure effective and appropriate use of email. Staff should be especially mindful that it is extremely difficult to convey body language, context and approach in email form.

For the sender:

- Be mindful of the tone of your email – do not convey negative thoughts, feelings and/or negative feedback
- Avoid the use of capital letters, bold or coloured fonts, underlining and enlarged fonts
- Avoid sending an email when emotionally charged or upset
- Be mindful of the timing of the email, especially if it contains bad news or issues e.g. try to avoid the end of the working day or the end of the week
- Do not expect a reply if an email is sent out of working hours
- Use email to provide clear instructions and actions with deadlines if required
- When sending an email to multiple people ensure the email is directed to the staff member(s) required to 'action' the email and this is clear in the content
- Be mindful that when a staff member is Cc'd into an email this implies no action is required from them

For the receiver:

- Open and read emails within working hours, unless it fits your working pattern to work out of hours
- Avoid responding to an email whilst emotional or upset. Take time to reflect and calm down before replying
- Seek clarity verbally/face to face if you are unsure of the meaning of an email. Be mindful that your interpretation of an email may be misunderstood

Out of Hours Email Automated Response

It is recommended that staff members set an out of hours automated response to their email address. This may be useful especially during holiday times.

An example of an out of hours automated reply:

Thank you for your email. The school is now closed until [insert date]. This inbox will not be monitored daily. I will respond when school reopens on [insert date]. Should you have a safeguarding query or concern out of school hours, please see the school website (safeguarding section) for further guidance and advice and useful out of hours emergency services and non-emergency contact numbers to support you until the school reopens. With thanks.

All members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place in which to work and learn. Unacceptable behaviour by staff will not be tolerated. Where such behaviour does occur, action will be taken to deal with the person(s) concerned following the BWCAT Disciplinary Policy.

Streamlining Communication

BWCAT schools seek to constantly review all forms of communication and endeavour to streamline communication to reduce staff workload. Examples of streamlining communication include centralising notices in a staff weekly bulletin, weekly staff briefings, use of the staff intranet/Microsoft Teams, Governor Hub, use of the school website, parental newsletters, parent management information apps.

Policy Review

BWCAT is committed to monitoring and regularly reviewing this policy. This policy will be reviewed once every three years.



Appendix 1 - Communication Incident Report Form

Name of School	
Name of person completing the form	
Date of incident	
Time of incident	
Location of incident	

Name of alleged perpetrator	Age	Gender

Name of perceived victim	Age	Gender

Details of the incident	

Details of witness(es)

Action Taken

Is this a repeated incident/offence	Yes / No
Signature:	Date:

Headteacher Consideration and Outcome	
Headteacher Signature:	
Date:	



Appendix 2

Model Letter – Step 3 – Written Warning from the Headteacher

Dear

Following my email dated [insert date], a copy of which is enclosed. I have received a report about your unacceptable conduct. This incident occurred on [DATE] at approximately [TIME]. I have been informed that you [SUMMARY OF INCIDENT, INCLUDING EFFECT UPON STAFF, PUPILS OR OTHER PARENTS]

I must inform you that [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to defend its staff, students, parents and other members of the school community.

I am therefore issuing this notice that if I receive a further report of unacceptable conduct from you, I will have no option but to instigate the BWCAT formal procedure and request that the Chair of the Academy Council reviews your conduct and issues you with a final written warning.

If you have any concerns about the school which led to your unacceptable conduct, you should raise these with the school in accordance with the BWCAT Complaints Policy, a copy of which is attached for your consideration.

I trust we will now be able to put this matter firmly behind us.

Yours sincerely,

[SIGNED HEADTEACHER]



Appendix 3

Model Letter – Step 4 - Final Written Warning – Chair of the Academy Council

Dear

Following previous incidents on [insert date], of which you have received notice of and copies of which are enclosed. I have received a further report about your unacceptable conduct on [DATE] at approximately [TIME]. I have been informed that you [SUMMARY OF INCIDENT, INCLUDING EFFECT UPON STAFF, PUPILS OR OTHER PARENTS]

I must inform you that [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to defend its staff, students, parents and other members of the school community.

I am therefore issuing you with a final written warning, if I receive a further report of unacceptable conduct from you, I will have no option but to instigate the BWCAT formal procedure to withdraw you permission to enter or be on the premises of [INSERT SCHOOL NAME]. Prior to withdrawing your permission to enter or be on the premises of [insert school name], you will be given the opportunity to present and respond to the incidents which have occurred.

A copy of the BWCAT Communications Policy is attached for your consideration.

I should warn you that, if your permission to enter or be on the school premises is withdrawn, you can be removed from the premises by a police officer and you may be prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted, you will be liable to a fine of up to £500 and have a criminal conviction record against you.

I trust that we will now be able to put this matter firmly behind us.

Yours sincerely

[CHAIR OF THE ACADEMY COUNCIL]



Appendix 4

Model Letter – Step 5 – invitation to make representations – Chair of the Academy Council

[letter to be sent by recorded delivery and email]

Dear

Following our previous correspondence, copies of which are enclosed, I have received notice of a further incident on [insert date] at approximately [insert time]. I have been informed that you [summary of incident, including effect upon staff, pupils or other parents].

As you are aware [insert school name] will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to defend its staff, students, parents and other members of the school community.

Due to the previous incidents which have occurred, I am now considering imposing a ban which will prevent you from entering or being on school premises. I am inviting you to make representations, to present your side of the story in relation to these incidents. If you wish to make representations, please send these to me at [insert email] on or before [insert date]. The Academy Council will take your representations into account when deciding on whether a ban should be imposed.

You do not have to take any action in relation to this letter. However, your representations will not be included when the Academy Council makes their decision.

We will write to you to conclude the outcome of our decision.

Yours sincerely

[Chair of the Academy Council]

Appendix 5

Model Letter – Step 6 – Ban on Entering School Premises – Chair of the Academy Council

[letter to be sent by recorded delivery and email]

Dear

Further to my letter dated [DATE], a copy of which is enclosed as well as a copy of all correspondence you have received. The Academy Council has reviewed all available documentation and considered the representation you have made regarding the incident. The Academy Council has concluded that you are not to enter or be on school premises for the following reasons:

Insert reasons for the ban/how the conclusion has been reached.

I am therefore instructing you that you are not to enter or be on the school premises, namely [insert school name] without the prior knowledge and permission of the Headteacher which will only be given for a good reason. The withdrawal of permission for you to enter or be on school premises takes effect immediately.

If you do not comply with this instruction, we shall arrange for a police officer to remove you from the premises, and you may be prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, you are liable to a fine of up to £500 and a criminal conviction will be recorded against you.

Notwithstanding this decision, the Headteacher, members of staff and the Academy Council remain committed to the education of your [SON/DAUGHTER/CHILDREN], who must continue to attend school as normal. You may bring your [SON/DAUGHTER/CHILDREN] to school and collect [HIM/HER/THEM] at the end of the school day, but you must not go beyond the school gate or cross the boundary of the school premises.

The Academy Council will take steps to review the continuance of this decision again on [DATE]. In deciding whether it is necessary to extend the withdrawal of permission to enter or be on the school's premises, the Academy Council will take into account the extent of your compliance with the instruction, any appropriate and sincere expression of regret and any assurances of future good conduct received from yourself, together with evidence of your co-operation with the school in other respects.

If you wish to provide written comments for me to consider when I carry out my review, please send them to the school to arrive at least 5 school days before the date of my review, i.e. by [DATE]. Any such additional comments should be restricted to your conduct since the decision was made.

Yours Sincerely,

[CHAIR OF ACADEMY COUNCIL]

The 16 schools in our Trust:

St. Mary's Menston, a Catholic Voluntary Academy

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School Otley, a Voluntary Academy

Ss Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School Ilkley, a Voluntary Academy

St Mary's Horsforth Catholic Voluntary Academy

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School Pudsey, a Voluntary Academy

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Harrogate, a Voluntary Academy

St Mary's Catholic Primary School Knaresborough, a Voluntary Academy

St. Stephen's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, a Voluntary Academy

Holy Name Catholic Voluntary Academy

St Roberts Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

St John Fisher Catholic High School Harrogate, a Voluntary Academy

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Tadcaster, a Voluntary Academy

Barkston Ash Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Barnoldswick, a Voluntary Academy

St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy



The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust

The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust is a charity and a company limited by Guarantee, registered in England and Wales.

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